

THE
CERTAIN INCREASE OF THE
GLORY AND KINGDOM OF
JESUS:

Ryland & the Younger S. S. of Bristol.
A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT

Chard, in Somersetshire,

On WEDNESDAY Evening, *June* JULY 11th, 1794,

AT

THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE
BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

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THE CHURCH AT CHARD,
AND OTHERS WHO HEARD IT.

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The Pastor, and Members, of the Baptist Church,
at Chard, in Somersetshire, with the other Ministers,
and Brethren, belonging to the *Western Association*, who requested the publication of the
ensuing Discourse.

HONORED BRETHREN,

IT is solely in submission to your judgment, and in compliance with your desire, that I have been induced to transcribe, and commit to the press, the substance of that Sermon which I delivered among you at my first interview. In the delightful subject we all have reason to rejoice; and I doubt not but your zeal for the Redeemer's Kingdom induced you to urge its publication. But I regret that I could do no more justice to so exalted a Theme, either at the time the Discourse was delivered, or in writing it out at length. As I had only short notes when I preached it, and was prevented from penning down the enlargement immediately, by a long journey, which I had previously appointed, I cannot answer for the exact correspondence of every expression with what you heard from the pulpit. But all the main ideas are the same; and if I could have amended the arrangement and illustration, I should not have scrupulously refused an alteration. I heartily wish it were better calculated to comfort your hearts, and encourage your exertions in the service of our blessed Lord: but after taking what pains my other engagements

ments would allow, in recollecting, and preparing it for your perusal, I must now submit it to your candor, and the blessing of our condescending Lord. If you find defects, when you read it at your leisure, which your devout affections prevented you from noticing, when we were assembled in the house of God, let them excite you to pray that I may obtain an increasing supply of diligence, abilities, and zeal. Accept my thanks for the Christian Friendship wherewith you, and all my honored Brethren, have received into your connection a Stranger, removed to your neighbourhood, by the most unexpected course of Providence. May the increase of Christ's Kingdom, in this part of the island, and all over the world, be the object of our most earnest solicitude, and the end for which we shall continue to labor, while life endures.

Be assured, that it is with the sincerest gratitude, respect, and esteem, that I subscribe myself,

Dear and honored Brethren,

Your obliged and affectionate,

tho' unworthy Servant,

JOHN RYLAND.

Bristol,

Aug. 8th, 1794.

JOHN III. 30.

HE MUST INCREASE.

WE are now assembled, my honored Fathers and Brethren, with the avowed design of seeking the advancement of our Redeemer's kingdom. We have been hearing the letters from a number of Christian Churches, with which we are connected, giving an account of the state of Religion among them. Thanks be to God, that the tidings communicated have, for the most part, given us pleasure. And now, by our united prayers, we would call down the influences of the Holy Spirit; by our private consultations, we would strengthen each other's hands in God; and, by our public services, we would build up the people of God in their most holy faith, and call upon rebellious sinners to submit to the Prince of Peace. This being the grand and sole end of our Association, what subject can more powerfully attract our attention, or more deeply affect our hearts, than this brief but comprehensive assurance, given us by the first Baptist Preacher in the world, that HE, whose way *John* was sent to prepare, and whose cause it is *our* glory to subserve, **MUST** assuredly **INCREASE**?

The whole verse clearly exhibits the humility and disinterested fidelity of that Holy Man, who

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was

was sent before the Messiah, in the spirit and power of Elijah. While his following language, down to the end of the chapter, remarkably confirms our Lord's observation, Matt. xi. 11, that, among all who were born of women, there had not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: for we find none of the Apostles speaking with equal clearness, concerning the person and work of the Savior, till after his crucifixion, and the effusion of the Holy Spirit; and even posterior to those events, there are not many passages, in their sublimest writings, that are more full of evangelical truth.

But waving further notice now of this ensuing context, let us briefly glance at the preceeding verse. There John speaks of Christ, and of his Church, as the Bridegroom and the Bride. "He" that *hath* the Bride is the Bridegroom." But with respect to himself, he disclaims any higher character than that of "the Bridegroom's Friend," who "standeth and heareth him, and rejoiceth greatly" "because of the Bridegroom's voice:" averring, that his "joy was fulfilled," his happiness was raised to the most exalted height, in seeing the union consummated between Christ and his redeemed, whom he had espoused to himself.

While John exulted in the greatness of his Lord, and in his peculiar and unrivalled propriety in his Church, he not only confesses his own inferiority, but willingly expects that the wide difference between

tween him and his divine Master, would soon become more visible to every spectator. *He must increase,* says the Baptist, *but I must decrease.* Such was the purpose of Heaven, and he fully subscribed to its fitness and propriety. Let but his Lord be glorified, and John was willing to be laid aside. His highest honor was to have been employed as Christ's forerunner. He came baptizing in water for this cause, that the Messiah might be manifested to Israel, and now his work was nearly ended. As the inferior lights of Heaven disappear at the rising of the sun, so were all the luminaries of the Jewish Church eclipsed by the appearance of the Sun of Righteousness. Indeed, the light of the whole Mosaic dispensation was, like that of the moon, a borrowed, reflected light; and it waxed and waned in like manner. In the days of Solomon it resembled the moon at the full. But "as the moon, from the time
 " of her being full, is approaching nearer and
 " nearer to her conjunction with the sun, and at the
 " same time her light is more and more decreasing,
 " till at length, when the conjunction takes place,
 " it seems to be wholly swallowed up in the light of
 " the sun;" so it was with the Jewish Church: its glory and splendor was raised to the greatest height in the days of Solomon, and, from that period, it had been declining, more and more, till the time of our Lord's incarnation. But this declension was rendered subservient to the introduction of a more spiritual œconomy, far exceeding the former in glory. And now, for a like reason, when Jesus had

entered upon his public Ministry, John the Baptist was to decrease. The former Prophets had been like stars, which gave light in the night; and on the approach of Gospel Day, those stars had disappeared. The spirit of prophecy had been withdrawn from the Jewish Church, for some time before the coming of our Lord. But when his blessed appearance drew very nigh, John, the greatest of all the Prophets, was sent before him, as the Morning-Star, the brightest of all the stars, is the harbinger of approaching day. But when Christ came in his public ministry, the light of this Morning-Star decreased too, as the brightest of the planetary train, the forerunner of the rising sun, is lost in the superior lustre of his beams, soon after he arises.†

Nor was it any subject of regret to that burning and shining light, that his Lord should so greatly outshine him; he was willing to be concealed, or withdrawn, that the Savior might shine forth with greater splendor. He had no wish that the manifestation of the Redeemer's glory should be delayed, that he himself might have the more time to shine, and that his Disciples might rejoice in his light for a longer season. He was glad to recommend them to a more excellent teacher. He rejoiced greatly in the increasing discovery of the divine glories of Jesus, and wished to direct every eye to behold the Lamb of God. And verily this is the best and noblest ground of joy to all the friends of God and Man. All other lights, that have shined in the Church, have

† See Edwards on Redemption, 1st edit. p. 111 and 190.

have soon arrived at their zenith, and have then declined and disappeared out of our hemisphere ; but HE, who is eminently "the light of the world," *must still increase*, till this whole benighted globe is illuminated with his brightness ; and he will be the light and glory of the upper world for ever.

Let us pursue the pleasing subject, my honored and beloved friends, by enquiring,

First. Wherein consists that increase of our glorious Lord, which is here represented as necessary and certain. And,

Secondly. What considerations may best establish our faith in the assured expectation of this interesting and important event.

I. It is proposed to consider the nature of that increase which the Baptist confidently expected should attend his blessed Lord.

Doubtless he principally refers to the manifestation of his spiritual glory, and to the establishment of his kingdom of grace.

He could not intend an increase of worldly greatness, pomp and power, for we know, by the subsequent history of the life of Christ, that he never possessed these objects of human ambition, while he abode on earth. They are things he never aspired after while here below, nor was it

designed that he should attain them. It is true, that after the time that John bare this testimony, Jesus became more known, in all parts of the land of Judea, and Galilee, and in Jerusalem the metropolis, which had so long been accounted the holy city. But he was not acknowledged by the Priests, and Jewish Rabbis, and it remained a plausible objection to his character, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" — In short, the more he made known his views, and explained his doctrine, the more he was slighted and opposed, and called to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. Nor was this opposition confined to the profligate and abandoned, but it was principally conducted by those who made the highest pretensions to superior sanctity. The publicans and harlots sometimes listened to him with attention; but the Scribes and Pharisees were inveterate in their prejudices against him, and "rejected the counsel of God against themselves." They often openly reviled him, and more clandestinely circulated the foulest slanders against his character; and it was chiefly through their influence, who ought to have been the first to have made him known unto Israel, as being best acquainted with the writings of the Prophets, that he was generally, "despised and rejected of men." Unmoved by his miraculous powers, unallured by the gracious words that continually proceeded from his lips, his enemies indulged increasing rancor against him; and, at length, they stirred up all the multitude to join in requiring

requiring his death. They came out against him, " as against a thief or a robber ;" they " preferred " a murderer before him ;" they seized him " with " wicked hands," and led him forth, without the gates of Jerusalem, to suffer the death of the cross. There they hanged him on the accursed tree, as one whom " man despised," as him that his own " nation abhorred."

Thus he that had all his life been " a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," found his distresses and his sufferings increase, till they came to that awful crisis, wherein his Father also was " pleased " to bruise him," and awakened the sword of vengeance to exert its utmost rigor against him. Ah John! with what a Baptism was *he* overwhelmed, whom thou thoughtest thyself unworthy to immerse in the waters of Jordan ! Yet the prediction of John was accomplished, amidst all the unparallelled circumstances of this mournful scene.

It was announced that *He must increase*, and lo ! in the midst of poverty and reproach, of apparent weakness, and of cruel sufferings, Jesus exhibited an *increasing* display of Godlike fortitude, and resolution; of spotless purity and rectitude; of infinite zeal for his Father's honor; and of the riches of grace and compassion for wretched ruined man. He gave " his " back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them " that plucked off the hair, he hid not his face from " shame and spitting. He was led as a Lamb to the
" slaughter,

"slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so he opened not his mouth." He was willing to purchase his Church with his blood: and answered not a word for himself before the bar of Pilate, that he might open his mouth afterwards for the dumb, and plead effectually the cause of the guilty, before the tribunal of God. He had "engaged his heart to approach unto God," as the surety and substitute of his people, and the flaming sword of justice could not intimidate him from drawing near the burning throne. He was numbered with transgressors himself, that he might justify the ungodly, and make them associates with Angels, and inheritors of celestial glory.

On these transactions all the future *increase* of his kingdom absolutely depended. But now the purchase of redemption has been completed, what shall prevent the Savior from receiving his full reward? When his last sufferings were approaching, he said, to Andrew and Philip, "the hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say, unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Had the Son of God become man, and not suffered death in the nature he assumed, he must have entered Heaven again alone; and have been a solitary man in glory, without any of that species of creatures with whom he had formed so intimate a relation, to bear him company above. But now, as surely as all who

were

were in Adam became obnoxious to death, through his disobedience; so shall all who are in Christ be entitled to eternal life, by his obedience unto death.

Before his body was taken from the cross, he transported into Paradise one sample of his purchase, rescued from the next gibbet; ascertaining by that specimen of the converted thief, that his sufferings and death had laid the sure foundation of Satan's ruin. And before his own flesh could see corruption, he burst the bonds of death asunder, by which it was impossible he should be holden. He rose victorious over the grave, taking the keys of Hell and of Death into his possession, and ascending triumphant to his Father's throne.

Well then might John affirm, *He must increase*, when he foresaw that his shameful death would be followed by so glorious a resurrection; when he who
 “ for a little time had been made lower than the
 “ Angels, for the suffering of death, should be
 “ crowned with glory and honor; and after he had
 “ by himself purged our sins, should sit down on the
 “ right hand of the Majesty on high: being made
 “ so much better than the Angels, as he hath by
 “ inheritance obtained a more excellent name than
 “ they.”

And how much more did the transactions of Pentecost justify this blessed prediction. Then was so copious an effusion of the SPIRIT bestowed on the
 Apostles,

Apostles, that they, who had lately hid themselves in secret chambers for fear of the Jews, were filled with courage and boldness, to testify to all the house of Israel, that the same Jesus whom they had crucified, was assuredly the Lord Messiah. And such a divine energy attended the word, that “ when they
 “ heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and
 “ said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles,
 “ Men and Brethren, what shall we do? Then they
 “ who gladly received the Word, were baptized :
 “ and the same day there were added about three
 “ thousand souls.” In vain was persecution excited against the Apostles, by the Rulers, and Elders, and Scribes ; in vain the self-righteous Pharisees, and the sceptical Saducees united against them, “ being
 “ grieved that they taught the people, and preached,
 “ thro’ Jesus, the resurrection from the dead: many
 “ of them who heard the word believed: and the
 “ number of the men” was soon increased to “ about
 “ five thousand.” And after this, “ Believers were
 “ the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of
 “ men and women.”

The extensive donations of the Father to his incarnate Son had been long since recorded by David, and Isaiah. “ Ask of me, and I will give the Heavens
 “ then for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts
 “ of the earth for thy possession.”— “ It is a light
 “ thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up
 “ the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved
 “ of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the
 Gentiles,

“ Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation
 “ to the end of the earth.” The Scripture cannot
 be broken, these promises must be accomplished,
 and even Jewish infidelity and persecution were
 overruled to forward the increase of the Messiah’s
 kingdom. When “ they who were scattered abroad
 “ upon the persecution that arose about Stephen,
 “ travelled” into distant countries, tho’ some of
 them preached “ the word to none but unto the
 “ Jews only,” others “ spake unto the Grecians,
 “ preaching the Lord Jesus: and the hand of the
 “ Lord was with them: and a great number believed
 “ and turned to the Lord.”

But the greatest instrument of *increasing* the suc-
 cess of the Gospel among the Gentiles, was one who
 for a time was the most violent persecutor of the
 believing Jews. The evangelical Prophet had
 assured the desponding Church, “ thy children shall
 “ make haste: thy destroyers, and they that made
 “ thee waste shall go forth of thee.” So the com-
 mon translation interprets his language, but the pro-
 mise is still more glorious as it is rendered by the
 celebrated Lowth,

“ They, that destroyed thee, shall soon become thy
 “ builders;
 “ And, they that laid thee waste, shall become thine
 “ offspring.”

In Saul of Tarsus this prediction was most eminently
 fulfilled. He that had so cruelly “ made havoc of
 “ the Church,” was not only numbered with her
 most

most faithful sons, but became a wise master-builder, who propagated the faith he once destroyed. "When it pleased God, who separated him " from the womb, and called him by his grace, to " reveal his Son in him, that he might preach him " among the Heathen," he " laboured more abundantly than all" the Apostles. Surprising were the effects of his ministry, " which Christ wrought " by *him*, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and " deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the " power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, *he* fully " preached the Gospel of Christ."

Thus it was intended that Jesus should *increase*, i. e. that his true Disciples should be multiplied; that an innumerable multitude of souls should be " rescued from the power of darkness," and be " translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Time would fail us to run over the history of the Church in past ages, and to shew the increase of his kingdom to the present period. The acts of the Apostles affords us a delightful specimen of the progress of his Gospel in the primitive age, and succeeding histories ascertain the continued attention of Providence to the interests of the Church,

Persecutions have been raised from time to time, and every instrument of cruelty has been employed against the faithful Martyrs of Jesus. The enemies of the cross heretofore dared to triumph that 'Christianity

* tianity was blotted out, and the worship of the
 * Gods restored.' But the rabble of Roman deities
 have long ceased to be worshipped, and Jesus is still
 acknowledged and adored. HE MUST INCREASE,
 and every enemy shall be crushed beneath his feet,
 who is not induced to submit and touch the sceptre
 of his grace. The most determined, and most sub-
 tle of his foes, shall at last be constrained to confess,
 with the wounded apostate Julian, "Thou hast
 " overcome, O Galilean !"

The great enemy of our Lord, and of his truth,
 has not only stirred up persecutors to annoy his
 Saints, but has endeavored by unnumbered errors to
 infect the Church, and corrupt the minds of pro-
 fessed Christians from "simplicity towards Christ."
 The degenerate Church of Rome, especially, has
 perverted the doctrines, the ordinances, and the
 morals of the Gospel, and made war with the rem-
 nant that endeavoured to maintain the truth as it is
 in Jesus. For how many ages did almost all the
 world wonder after the blaspheming Beast? It was
 long permitted unto him "to make war with the
 " Saints, and to overcome them: and power was
 " given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and
 " nations;" excepting those "whose names are writ-
 " ten, from the foundation of the world, in the
 Book of Life of the slaughtered Lamb."

But some witnesses did God reserve for himself
 amidst the darkest ages, of whom it might be justly
 said, under all their sufferings, "Here is the
 " patience

"patience and the faith of the Saints!" And at the æra of the Reformation, a blessed increase of light and life from God was imparted to his Church, which neither the persecutions of the Papists, nor the errors that have since been disseminated among Protestants themselves, have ever been able to extinguish. And now Rome trembles to her centre. The tenth part of the city seems to be falling; and, tho' open infidelity threatens for a while to take place of gloomy superstition, and hypocritical disguise; we wait, with sanguine expectation, to see "the Spirit of Life from God" enter into his witnesses, and raise them to celestial honors, in the sight of all their enemies.

In the mean while be it observed, that though the Church *below* has not been always increasing in numbers, the Church *above* is continually increasing. The gates of the new Jerusalem, which are never shut day nor night, are perpetually admitting some happy spirit, transported from a state of imperfection and conflict, to the perfection of holiness and bliss; while every new inhabitant of glory makes some addition to the joys of Heaven; is considered as a fresh trophy of redeeming love and efficacious grace; and Angels and Saints, with pleasure and surprize, are ready to say, "Art thou become like unto us?" O my Brethren! Could we look into the invisible world, and behold that goodly company, who have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" could we compare the present

sent inhabitants of the celestial mansions, with those who were before the throne when John uttered this prediction; we should see the truth of his words amply confirmed by a bright cloud of witnesses.

At the same time, we are fully warranted to believe, that the principal harvest of the earth has not yet been gathered in. This declaration shall be more fully verified in future, than in all the ages that are past. We may be mistaken in our conjectures, as to "the times and seasons, which the Father hath reserved in his own power:" but we are well assured, that there shall be a far more extensive application of Christ's redemption, than has yet taken place. In spite of all obstacles, which earth and hell have laid in the way, the everlasting Gospel must be preached among all nations. Antichrist must utterly fall. The rejection of the Jews proved the occasion of enriching and reconciling the world, but their being received again into the Church shall be as "life from the dead." All nations shall be brought to the knowledge of the Redeemer, all people shall serve him. *He must increase*, till his mystical fullness is compleated; till all his elect being regenerated and sanctified, he can say to his Father, "Here am I, and the children, thou hast given me."

Then cometh the end of time, when the last of his chosen is brought home to God, and made meet for the inheritance of the Saints in light. Then this world,

world, which was erected as a scaffolding for the Church, shall be taken down. The last trumpet shall sound. The dead shall be raised. The throne shall be set, and the books shall be opened. Then must the ungodly be cast into the fire that cannot be quenched, while the righteous are admitted into the kingdom of their Father.

There will their positive happiness be increasing o all eternity. For, tho' their deliverance from error, sin, pain, and grief, will be compleat, at their first entrance into glory, there must still be room for finite minds to increase in the knowledge and enjoyment of the infinite Good; and consequently, to make the most rapid and uninterrupted progress in positive holiness, humility and joy, for ever.

And all this eternal felicity will be entirely owing to the blood of the Lamb. It will be given to his redeemed as the reward of *his* infinitely meritorious obedience. All this exceeding great and eternal weight of glory must be reckoned, therefore, as *his increase*. And thus, as Isaiah, long before his incarnation, asserted, the Son of God, who was born a child at Bethlehem, is justly stiled "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, *the Father of the everlasting age*, the Prince of Peace:" for "of *the increase of his government, and peace, there shall be no end.*"

Let

II. Let me proceed, my dear friends, to lay before you some considerations, which may confirm our faith, in the assured expectation, that *He must increase.*

I may briefly remark, before I specify the positive grounds of this conclusion, that it was not founded upon the prospect of his employing a *military force* to propagate his religion with the sword. He never used, nor authorized the use of carnal weapons, to enforce his truth. —Nor was this expectation built upon the *rank and influence* of his adherents. In the primitive Church it was owned, that “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called;” and such has been the procedure of infinite Wisdom to this day. “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.” Nor is it on the *multitude* of Christ’s genuine followers, in any period of time already past, that we ground our hope of his future increase. Nominal Christians form but a small minority of the inhabitants of the globe, and how much smaller is the number of them that are Christians indeed? Yet we firmly believe the case shall be widely different before the end of time.

We are far from building our hopes upon any flattering promises of worldly *gain*, and sensual *indulgences*, by which our Master would draw followers after him. He always held up a very opposite scene to his people's view. He faithfully warned them that if any man would come after him, he must "deny himself, and take up his cross daily," and follow him through evil report as well as good. Nor do we ground the expectation of an increase of his adherents, upon the correspondence between his plan of Salvation, and the *native bias* of the human heart. His redemption is admirably suited to a sinner's necessities, but not to his depraved inclinations. It is too humbling, too holy, too heavenly, to suit an unrenewed mind: and the carnal heart, which is "enmity against God," and cannot bear subjection to his righteous *Law*, will be as little pleased with the glorious *Gospel*, till that enmity is slain.

But we are assured he must increase from such considerations as the following:

Because he is the SON of GOD in the highest and most absolute sense, and therefore heir of all things. For as John the Baptist observes, verse 35, "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." The many arguments, for this interesting truth of our Lord's divinity, which might be drawn from the inspired writings, we cannot now review; let me only observe, that one of no small weight is deducible from the preceeding context,

text, where John, who was the greatest of all the Old Testament Prophets, acknowledges so essential a difference between himself and his blessed Master, representing Jesus as the Bridegroom, who possessed the Bride, and himself as nothing more than the Bridegroom's friend. The same similitude is used by Paul, when enforcing conjugal duties on the Ephesians, chap. v. 23—33. plainly indicating Christ's superiority to the *whole collective body* of good men, from the beginning of time to the end of the world; and implying that he stands in such a relation to them, has such a propriety in them, and so great and direct an influence on all their holiness and happiness, as never can be made to accord with any lower idea of him, than that of "God manifest in the flesh," who has "purchased his Church with his own blood." — Twice over in the verse that follows our text, doth John declare, "He that cometh from above is all: he that cometh from Heaven, is above all:" and hence we infer, with him, that *he must increase*. Jesus could say without blasphemy, "All things that the Father hath are mine." And again, "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" which the Jews justly understood, as claiming God to be "his own Father," in such a sense, as implied his "making himself equal with God." He affirmed it was the Father's will, "that all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father who hath sent him." And, on other occasions, he declared, "if ye had

“ known me, ye should have known my Father
 “ also:” and “ he that hath seen me hath seen the
 “ Father.” From all which we infer, that neither
 did he consider himself, nor was he considered by
 his forerunner, as “ a fallible peccable man,” as
 the modern Socinians term him; “ but as the only
 begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

We are persuaded, therefore, that *he must increase*,
 because he hath all power to overcome every enemy,
 that opposeth his blessed reign; and we are sure his
 heart is thoroughly engaged in the erection and
 extension of his kingdom. “ God giveth not the
 “ Spirit by measure unto him.” But “ it hath
 “ pleased the Father that in him all fullness should
 “ dwell;” and “ out of his fullness have all” his
 people “ received, and grace for grace.” Still shall
 his cause be carried on; nor will the blessed Spirit
 grow weary of his beloved work, in taking of the
 things of Christ, and revealing them to the souls of
 men. He shall still “ convince the world of sin, of
 “ righteousness, and of judgement.” He shall still
 “ gather others” unto the Messiah’s standard, “ be-
 “ sides those that have been gathered” unto him.
 He shall descend, in his gracious influences, like
 “ floods on the dry ground,” and make “ the wil-
 “ derness to become a fruitful field,” and “ the
 “ desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose.”

Since John uttered this prediction, Jesus has so
 completed the *Purchase* of Redemption as to ensure
 its

its *Application*. He will not desert the cause in which he has laid down his precious life. The Father will never deprive his beloved *Son* of his inheritance; nor defraud his faithful *servant* of his hire. Did he not beforehand engage that he should "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." He shall bring as many sons to glory, and bestow on them as much happiness, as he himself shall account a sufficient recompence for all the agonies he endured, in the garden, and on the cross. As much glory shall redound to God, as much felicity shall be communicated to the redeemed, as shall constrain the great Philanthropist, in the full recollection of Gethsemane, and Calvary, to say, 'It is enough! I am satisfied! I am fully repaid for all my bitter sufferings, and for my bloody death!' But Jesus has not had half enough yet. Ethiopia must stretch forth her hands unto God. God must enlarge Japhet, and dwell again in the tents of Shem, and even Canaan must be his servant.

He must increase, for the *decrees* of Heaven ascertain the great event. God, who cannot lie, had "promised before the world began," that "eternal life" should be imparted thro' him, to an innumerable multitude, who were chosen in him, and predestinated to the adoption of sons. The Counsel of Peace was then between the three persons in the undivided Godhead; and the Covenant of Redemption was confirmed by the oath of God. "Before the mountains were settled, while as yet

" God had not made the earth," then did eternal Wisdom rejoice in the prospect of his people's salvation, and then were his " delights with the sons of men." The Son of God, with ineffable pleasure, anticipated the eternal happiness of his elect ; and he " who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," cannot be defeated in the execution of his gracious purposes, or disappointed of his desired end.

A great part of Scripture consists of *promises* of the increase of the Messiah's kingdom, and it is evident that the season of their chief accomplishment is yet future. " In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people : and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid : and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them, &c. They shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain :"

“ tain ?” and in that day the whole globe shall be more devoted to God than Mount Zion was in the best periods of the former dispensation ; “ for the “ earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, “ as the waters cover the sea.” We will not multiply quotations, but refer you to the forty-ninth and sixtieth chapters of Isaiah, as containing a large and delightful description of that approaching season of prosperity, which awaits the Church of Christ ; our hopes of which are confirmed by the concurrent testimony of most of the other antient Prophets, and especially by the New Testament prophecies of Paul, and of John, respecting the ruin of Antichrist, or the Man of Sin, and the fulness of the Jews and Gentiles, being brought into the Church.

Nor shall the increase of the Church, in the latter day, be merely by an addition of numbers to the professed followers of the Lamb ; but [an increase of evangelical light, and vital holiness. We understand those prophetic expressions in a spiritual sense which assure us, that “ the light of the moon shall “ be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun “ shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in “ the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of “ his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.” “ Instead of brass,” says Jehovah, “ I will bring “ gold ; and instead of iron, I will bring silver, “ and instead of wood, brass ; and instead of stones, “ iron. And I will make thine inspectors peace ; “ and thine exactors righteousness.” The spiritual enjoyments

enjoyments of God's people shall then be increased, and raised to a degree of which we fear the generality of professors in the present day have little conception. "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord." The Lord shall be the everlasting light of his Church, and the days of her mourning shall be ended.

But perhaps you are dreading, Beloved, lest a day of trial should yet intervene before the dawn of that day of glory. Be that as it may, the Head of the Church is sufficient to support those who may be called to endure it, and to get himself increasing glory by every conflict his people are called to endure. That arm of the Lord will awake, and put on strength, which heretofore cut Rahab, and wounded the Dragon. No weapon formed against his Church shall prosper, but "the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath shall he restrain." The enemies of our Lord have often been permitted to combine in a very formidable manner against his interest, but they have always been baffled and confounded. Wherein they have dealt proudly he has shewn himself above them; and hath taken the subtlest of his foes in their own craftiness. We recollect how he "triumphed gloriously" over Pharaoh and his host, at the Red Sea. We remember when Sennacherib invaded Judah like a flood, filling the breadth of Immanuel's land, and reaching up to the neck; when he took all the fenced cities of Judah, and besieged Hezekiah

kiah in his metropolis; the insolent Rabsakeh blustered before the walls of Jerufalem, and Sennacherib sent letters to rail at the living God; but Hezekiah spread the blasphemous letter before the Lord, and Ifaiah was commissioned to encourage and strengthen his faith. The Virgin, the Daughter of Zion, laughed Assyria to scorn, and sang, " God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. God is in the midst of his city, she shall not be moved: God shall help her before the dawn of the morning."† " Then the Angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." We remember the disappointment of the proud and scornful *Agagite*, who thought to avenge Amalek upon the Jews, and cut off the whole nation at once, because Mordecai refused to prostrate himself before him. Impatient to glut his revenge, he prepares the lofty gibbet, and anticipates his haughty purpose; but unexpected mortification confounds him: he is compelled to proclaim the honors of the man he most abhorred; and the dismal sentence, " Hang *him* thereon," comes but just in time to prevent his seeing Mordecai, the door-keeper, installed in his own seat. We recollect the rage of *Antiochus* against the word of God, and the people of God, and the agonies of body and mind in which he afterwards expired, acknowledging the cause of

† Ps. xlvii. probably composed on this very occasion. See Venema in loc.

of his sufferings, and promising to make amends to the Jews if he might but enjoy an intermission of his pains. Under the Christian dispensation, a like miserable death was inflicted, by the immediate vengeance of Heaven, on him that "killed James " with the sword," and vainly intended to bring Peter forth to execution at the time he appointed. Insects of the meanest order were sufficient to humble the pride of that man, whom the blasphemy of his flatterers had equalled to God. *Nero*, the first of the Roman Emperors who persecuted the Christian Church, was adjudged, by the Senate, an enemy of the human race, and became his own executioner. And *Galerius*, one of the last of the Pagans that tormented the martyrs of Jesus, died in the same awful manner with *Herod* and *Antiochus*. Thus have thine enemies perished, O Lord!

We conclude that *JESUS must increase*, since this world, and all others, were "made by Him, and " for Him;" "without Him was not any thing " made that is made;" and "by Him all things " consist." This earth, especially, had been made in vain, or had been used only as a place of punishment, had not the Kingdom of Grace been erected here by the glorious Immanuel. But here he has determined that "Mercy shall be built up for ever," not at the expence of righteousness, God forbid! but "Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto " eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." They who truly understand the import and design of his mediation,

mediation, know that " he is first of all King of
 " Righteousness, and then, after that, King of
 " Peace." His cause is, therefore, the very cause
 of truth and rectitude. For he is the only-begotten
 of the Father, who hath truly revealed him; he
 hath vindicated the rights of Deity, and glorified all
 the perfections of God in the highest, while he hath
 published peace on earth, and displayed God's sove-
 reign good-will to men. His Kingdom is the King-
 dom of Grace and Glory! Infinite benevolence is
 displayed in its erection, and whole administration;
 and whether we consider the sweet harmony of the
 divine attributes in his own obedience unto death;
 or the transcript, of every moral excellence im-
 pressed by his Holy Spirit on the hearts of his re-
 generate people; we infer, that so excellent a
 Government can never be overturned, so blessed a
 Kingdom must increase. We may safely rest our
 hopes on the intrinsic goodness of his cause. It is
 so excellent, that it *ought* to prevail over all its
 opposers. Jesus " must reign, till he hath put all
 " enemies under his feet." He has the good wishes
 of every honest virtuous heart in the universe.
 Every intelligent being that is a friend to God, and
 to the created system; that has any love to true
 virtue, and to real happiness; must be on his side:
 and must rejoice that the irreversible decree of
 Heaven has determined, that HE MUST INCREASE;
 yea, that of the increase of his manifestative glory,
 and of the happiness of his loyal subjects, there shall
 be no end.

Thus

Thus have we, as proposed, considered the *nature* of that increase which is here predicted, and the *grounds* for concluding that it is certain and unfrustrable. What *Inferences* farther shall we draw, my Christian Brethren, from these premises?

Have not they abundant ground for joy and *gratitude* who are decidedly on Christ's side! You, my dear Brethren, were once aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel; you were once enemies in your minds to the King of Zion. He first conquered you by his grace, and now you love his gentle sway. You were made "willing in the day" of his power," and blessed be his name, that he thus subdued you to himself. Now you may bless God that ever you were born, for you were born to be happy for ever. You are on the safe side, the rising side, the side that *must* prevail, let what events so ever will take place. In life, in death, and to eternity, you are secure.

How should we all, my Christian Friends, and especially we, my honored Fathers and Brethren, who have been called unto the Ministry of the Word, be excited to *activity* and *resolution* in our Redeemer's cause. *He must increase*, and so he shall, whether we are faithful or not. But O! What an honor, what a pleasure, will it be, to be employed as instruments in promoting his blessed Kingdom! He does not need our services; but how great is his condescension in requiring them, and how great his liberality in requiring them.

Were

Were we to hold our peace, in God's controversy with a revolted world, deliverance and enlargement would arise to his Church from some other quarter, but we should be found traitors and rebels against the King of Kings. Whatever be our station, whatever are our talents, may we consider them as allotted to us for this very purpose, that we may promote the Kingdom of Christ.

Brethren ! seek the increase of Christ's Kingdom *in your own souls*. Let it be our daily prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done," in us, and by us. Our own happiness is best promoted by our being thoroughly subdued and entirely devoted to the Lord. May it appear, that Christ is increasingly precious to us, and that we are increasingly conformed to his likeness. Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, are the essential characteristics of his subjects. Shew that you prize and possess them.

And, O let us seek the increase of his kingdom *all around us* ; by the conversion of souls to God ; by their being "turned from darkness to light," and from the power of Satan to subjection to the Redeemer. Brethren, is there nothing more we can do to promote the cause of Christ ? The end of our life is Christ. Let us seek the attainment of that end with the utmost vigor. By the increase of Christian knowledge ; by promoting love to Christ, and love to the Brethren ; by building up the Saints in their most holy faith ; let us labor to subserve
hi

his Kingdom. May Christ be more known, more enjoyed, more glorified, thro' our means! May we be the happy instruments of increasing the evangelical comfort, and vital holiness of our fellow Christians!

Nor let us confine our efforts, and much less our ardent prayers, to the increase of true Godliness at home. Let us enlarge our views, and our plans for promoting the cause of Christ. A Negro Church of our own denomination is now planted on the coast of Africa, and numbers who were formerly torn from those injured shores, have been baptized into Christ, in Jamaica, and North-America. Let us remember in our prayers the free settlers of Sierra Leone; and their Brethren in the American Isles and Continent, who have been delivered from the yoke of Satan, tho' many of them are still held in slavery by Man.—We trust, that before this time, our Missionaries have reached the East Indies, and are employed in rolling away the stone, that the fable flocks of Hindoos may drink of the water of life. Let us be mindful of them before the throne; let us continue to send them liberal supplies. Let us be on the watch for fresh openings to spread the Gospel. Let us look out for other Missionaries, and beg of God to raise up such as shall not count life dear to them, when compared with the salvation of immortal souls. Let us enquire whither we may best make another inroad on the kingdom of Satan? Our Moravian Brethren are successful

successful among the Hottentots, shall we make an attempt to evangelize the Cafres? Or shall we send a Mission to any of the islands of the Southern Ocean? Millions of souls are perishing for lack of knowledge. If we indeed believe the Gospel, let us be eager to propagate it in every part of the globe. Let not avarice and rapine stimulate the children of this world to greater activity, than the love of Christ and souls can produce in the children of light.

If Christ *must* increase, his servants must be active. The indolent must be roused from their lukewarmness, or else be removed out of this world, to some other abode, before the glorious times predicted in the Bible can begin. Ye sons of Zion be strong, and let not your hands be slack. Let the people who do know their God be ambitious to perform exploits. While the earth resounds with the din of arms, and myriads exult in having destroyed the bodies of their fellow men, let us use our weapons, which are "not carnal, but mighty thro' the Spirit," for the salvation of immortal souls. Let us pursue this blessed object with diligence and ardor, with resolute self-denial, and disinterested love and zeal. Never may there be room to suspect that our aim is to increase our income, increase our influence, increase our reputation among men, or to increase the interest of a party. But be this our sole design that He may increase, whose we are, and whom we serve; that we

we be as reprobates. In all things," may we
 " approve ourselves as the Ministers of God, in
 " much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in
 " distresses, &c. in labors, in watchings, in fastings;
 " by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by
 " kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned,
 " by the word of truth, by the power of God, by
 " the armor of righteousness on the right hand and
 " on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil
 " report and good report &c." Such were the
 circumstances, and such the weapons, of primitive
 Ministers. And if at present God has lessened our
 trials, can any reason be given why we should lessen
 our zeal? I am persuaded you will suffer the
 word of exhortation, and if any word of censure
 seems implied, I honestly avow that I wish to point
 it first and chiefly against myself.

If we are enabled disinterestedly to pursue the
 honor of Christ, and the increase of his church, we
 shall, in the end, find our own account in the
 pursuit. He that prefers a private interest of his
 own, will dismally defeat his intention: but he that
 loses even his life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's
 shall find it. The increase of his Kingdom will
 sooner or later increase the joy and happiness of all
 his friends. May this be the chief end, therefore,
 both of our Ministry and of our lives.

Far from my soul be every suspicion of my dear
 and honored Brethren; with most of whom now
 present

present I have had but little time for personal acquaintance, but all of them I love, and the character of many I highly revere. But they, who know the evil of the heart, will not think it utterly superfluous, much less offensive, to say, that it were better for us that we had never been born, than for any of us to be found not truly on the side of CHRIST. Better would it have been to have spent our lives in the meanest occupation on earth, or to have endured a lot as wretched and degrading as that of the enslaved African; than for any of us to prove unbelieving, unholy, and unfaithful Ministers; traitors, like Judas, to the cause of our blessed Lord.

Finally, let all my hearers examine whether they are yet the genuine subjects of Christ's Kingdom? There can be no neutrality in this case; if we are not *for* him, we are *against* him. And, Oh, how awful will be the lot of them that oppose his Government, and despise his Grace! — But seeing it is said, that *He must increase*, this declaration affords encouragement for rebellious sinners to return and submit to him; to desert their connection with his foes, and enlist in the army of Jesus. He is willing to increase his kingdom among men, by receiving into the number of his happy subjects those that have been the most miserable vassals of sin. He will in no wise cast out any one that cometh to Him for salvation, let him be ever so wretched, unworthy, and guilty. “ It is a faithful

" saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus
" Christ came into the world to save sinners, of
" whom," said Paul, who had once been exceed-
ingly mad against the saints, " I am chief. How-
" beit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me
" *the chief*, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-
" suffering, for a pattern to them who should here-
" after believe on him to life everlasting. Now
" unto the King eternal, immortal, invisable, the
" only wise God, be honor, and glory, for ever
" and ever. Amen."

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NOTE upon John v. 23. quoted at the bottom of page 19th.

(1.) *He who honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father's VERACITY, who hath borne Testimony concerning his Son as a divine Savior.*

Hence the generality of those who reject the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, evidently set up their depraved reason above Revelation ; treating it as a thing incredible, even upon divine testimony, that there should be any such personal distinctions in the Deity, as they cannot comprehend. They would fain persuade themselves, that the Scriptures contain no such testimony. But it is a fact, which many of them cannot wholly conceal from their consciences, that the Bible favors our ideas, only they think it's obvious sense so mysterious, that any violence should be offered to the language of the inspired writers, rather than that this doctrine should be admitted. And some of their co-adjutors deny the inspiration of several parts of the Scripture, and the infallibility of Scripture testimony. O that they would consider 1. John v. 10. " He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, " because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son."

(2.) *He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father's GOVERNMENT as secured by the Son's meditation.*

If we deny the divinity of Christ, and deny, or lessen his atonement, we must deny, or proportionably lessen, the evil of sin, the importance of the law, and the authority, majesty, and infinite amiableness of God. Thus we must detract from the dignity of the Lawgiver and moral Governor, in exact proportion as we do from the Savior.

[See my Sermon on Christ manifested, p. 1. and Farewel Sermons, p. 16.]

(3.) *He honoreth not the Father's GRACE in the gift of his Son.*

If Christ be not truly divine, and yet made some atonement, as the *Arians* suppose, we have more room, by far, to wonder, that he should make so great a *purchase*, as the salvation of the whole Church ; than that he should give so great a *Price*, as his own precious blood. But the Scriptures always turn our surprize into the other

other channel ; *not*, God so loved CHRIST as to pardon innumerable sins, for his sufferings ; or, as to give eternal life to millions, for his obedience : *but*, God so loved the world as to give his only begotten SON, &c. and, he that spared not his own SON, &c. how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things ? John iii. 16. Rom. viii. 32.

And if Christ be a mere man, and made *no* atonement, as the Socinians assert, how is the Grace of God annihilated ! What have we to wonder at, that he who sent all the Prophets to instruct mankind, should send *one* more, called Jesus Christ ? Especially, if all the use of his coming, were simply to tell us, God was too merciful to do us any injury ; or that he would not punish those who *ought* to be pardoned ? We have most reason to wonder, on this hypothesis, at *his* being called the light of the Gentiles, who, according to the Socinians, is become the greatest idol in the world ! Strange indeed, that the greatest and plainest of all the Prophets, should be the worst understood !!!—See my Sermon on Mr. Hall's funeral, p. 17, and 77.

NOTE on the East Indian Mission, p. 30.

Pleasing accounts have just been received from our Brethren Thomas and Carey, who are safely arrived, and find multitudes eager to hear the word of God. Extracts from their letters are preparing for the press, to be published with the narrative of the rise and progress of the Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the Heathens.



